

The South London Waste Plan 2021-36 and the HGV problem

The Wimbledon Park Residents Association has been invited by government inspectors to a hearing to decide how waste in Merton will be processed in future. As we will explain, this could lead to a significant reduction in the number of lorries (HGV's) on our local roads.

Residents of Wimbledon Park will have noticed large numbers of waste carrying lorries creating traffic congestion and increased air pollution on our local roads. Most of these HGV's are carrying waste to sites on Weir Road in the Durnsford Industrial Estate. The South London Waste Plan 2012 specified how waste could be processed in Merton, Croydon, Kingston and Sutton and in particular it gave the green light for such sites in Weir Road. Unfortunately the traffic congestion and air pollution that would result from these sites was not assessed when planning permission was given and the sites have been allowed to develop without any restrictions on the traffic they generate.

It is known that the local roads along which these HGV's travel have very high levels of air pollution, which exceeds EU limits, and significant traffic congestion, but it was only recently that the number of waste carrying HGV's was quantified. Indeed, we recently surveyed the number of waste carrying HGV's using the Weir Road sites. We found that there were more than 600 such lorries going to and from these sites between 8am and 5 pm on a week day. That is about one a minute!. We also found that four fifth of these lorries were carrying their waste through Wimbledon from where it is generated further to the south. About ten thousand people die prematurely each year in London due to air pollution or, put another way, one in eight people in Merton will die prematurely. Those who live along the local roads with high levels of air pollution will most likely suffer serious health consequences.

There is now a new waste plan, the South London Waste Plan 2021-36 which determines where the waste of the same four boroughs will be processed until 2036. This document aspires to process waste in such a way as to not lead to poor air quality. However the method the South London Waste Plan 2021-36 used to assess the consequences of waste management on air quality was deeply flawed. Rather than assess the air pollution in the vicinity of where the waste is being processed it considers the effects on often distance places called air focus areas which are not all subject to excessive air pollution and are often not significantly affected by the waste sites being assessed.

These problems are well illustrated by the waste being processed on Weir Road in the Durnsford Industrial Estate. The South London Waste Plan 2021-36, gives a favourable grade to the air pollution created from these sites as the effects will not be felt in the nearest air focus area which is essentially the Broadway in Wimbledon ! As a result the South London Waste Plan 2021-36 concludes that the waste processing in Weir Road poses no problems and it can even be increased in future years. Local residents, who experience the excessive levels of air pollution and the traffic congestion, will disagree with this conclusion.

The Wimbledon Park Residents Association have objected to the South London Waste Plan 2021-36. We have proposed that the air pollution and traffic generated by waste disposal should be properly assessed and where this is found to lead to unacceptable levels of air pollution and traffic congestion, sites should be moved or restrictions should be placed on the amount of waste being processed on the corresponding sites. In particular

we propose that the waste processing sites in Weir Road are moved to a site which is closer to where the waste is generated.

In order for the South London Waste Plan 2021-36 to take effect it must be passed by two government inspectors who have asked the four boroughs a number of questions which indicate the areas of the plan with which they have reservations. In particular they have asked quite a number of question that relate to the objections we have made. The government inspectors, the planning officers of the four Boroughs, the waste operators and the Wimbledon Park Residents will meet in Merton on the first and second of September to discuss their differences. We can hope that the plan will be modified so as to take account of our objections.

The documents submitted by the Wimbledon Park Residents Association can be found at the website <http://www.wimbledonpark.com/>.